

Everyday Racism: Experiences of discrimination in Toronto

ABOUT THIS RESEARCH BRIEF

According to the 2022 Toronto Social Capital Study, racialized Torontonians, and especially those who identify as Black, are significantly more likely to face discrimination on a regular basis than white residents of the city.

The 2022 Toronto Social Capital Study is the most in-depth look at how people in the city relate to one another. Released by Toronto Foundation and the Environics Institute, along with 15 partners, the report covers Torontonians' wellbeing based on the key components of their social capital: social networks, social trust, civic engagement and neighbourhood support.

Based on interviews of over 4,000 Torontonians, the study's extensive findings were summarized in the [final report](#), released in November 2022. Here we return to explore the findings on discrimination in more depth.

Survey respondents were asked about their experience with the 10 separate types of discrimination, using the [Everyday Discrimination scale](#) developed by David R. Williams: In your day-to-day life, how often do any of the following things happen to you?

1. You are treated with less courtesy than other people are.
2. You are treated with less respect than other people are.
3. You receive poorer service than other people at restaurants or stores.
4. People act as if they think you are not smart.
5. People act as if they are afraid of you.
6. People act as if they think you are dishonest.
7. People act as if they're better than you are.
8. You are called names or insulted.
9. You are threatened or harassed.
10. You are followed around in stores.

For anyone who says they experience any of the above at least a few times a year, this follow-up question is posed:

11. What do you think is the main reason for these experiences? The options presented were: gender; ethnicity or race; age; religion; physical appearance; sexual orientation; education or income level; and physical disability.

All questions and corresponding data can be found in the appendix of this report or online at www.environicsinstitute.org.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Racism is the most common form of discrimination in Toronto

People can experience unfair treatment for a variety of reasons. But the most common form of discrimination in the city of Toronto is racism.

The Toronto Social Capital Survey asked Torontonians who say they experience any of these forms of discrimination to say what the main reason for this was. The most common answer is because of their ethnicity or race (**41%**) – a more common basis of discrimination than physical appearance (**34%**), age (**32%**) or gender (**30%**). But in the case of racialized Torontonians, **61%** of those who experience discrimination, say the reason they are discriminated against is because of their ethnicity or race; this rises to **76%** for Black Torontonians who experience discrimination.

The frequency of experiencing the 10 different types of discrimination covered in the survey were also combined into an index of everyday discrimination (higher scores on the index reflect more frequent experiences of discrimination). Among the largest racial identity groups in the city, Black Torontonians have the highest index scores. White Torontonians (**46%**) are almost twice as likely as their Black counterparts (**25%**) to have a very low index score.

Black Torontonians report more frequent discrimination

Fear

- **18%** of Black Torontonians experience people acting afraid of them at least a few times a month – twice the proportion of white Torontonians (**9%**);
- The proportion of Black Torontonians who report never experiencing people acting afraid of them (**46%**) is lowest among the largest racial identity groups in the city – 19 percentage points lower than white residents (**65%**).

Suspicion

- **19%** of Black Torontonians experience people acting as if they are dishonest at least a few times a month – twice the proportion of white Torontonians (**9%**);
- The proportion of Black Torontonians who say they are followed around in stores at least a few times a month (**15%**) is twice as high as than that of white Torontonians (**7%**);
- Only **2 out of 5** Black Torontonians (**41%**) report never being followed in stores, 28 percentage points lower than white residents (**69%**), and also much lower than the percentage of those from the other of the largest racial identity groups in the city.

Being looked down upon

- Black Torontonians are more likely than those from any of the other of the largest racial identity groups in the city to experience people acting as if they are better than them, at least a few times per month. This happens this frequently for **35%** of Black Torontonians, compared to **23%** of those who are white.
- The proportion of Black Torontonians who say that, at least a few times a month, other people act as if they think they are not smart is also higher than for any of the other of the largest racial identity groups in the city. This happens this frequently for **25%** of Black Torontonians, compared to **17%** of those who are white.

South Asian Torontonians also experience many forms of discrimination on a regular basis

- Compared to the other largest identity groups in the city, South Asian Torontonians are more likely to say that, at least a few times a month, they are treated with less respect, given worse service in restaurants or stores, or treated with less courtesy than other people are.
- South Asian Torontonians (**20%**) are more than twice as likely as those who are white (**8%**) to report receiving poorer service as restaurants and stores.
- South Asian Torontonians are the most likely of the largest racial identity groups in the city to report being treated with less respect than other people are, with **25%** reporting they experience this at least a few times a month, compared to **14%** of those who are white.

How does discrimination affect social capital?

Torontonians who report the most frequent discrimination have much lower social capital than those who report less frequent or no discrimination.

Social Trust

Social trust measures the amount of trust we have in other people and institutions. Torontonians reporting no discrimination have the highest scores on the social trust index, meaning they are more likely to be trusting of others; this social trust index score then falls steadily as the scores on the index of discrimination rise. This is true for all forms of discrimination taken together, as well as for discrimination based on different grounds, such as race, gender and age.

Race, Disability and Discrimination

Torontonians with a disability are more likely than those without to face discrimination, as reflected in their higher mean scores on the study's discrimination scale. In particular, racialized Torontonians with a disability have some of the highest scores on this scale – indicating more frequent experiences of discrimination. These findings highlight how the intersection of race and disability amplifies experiences of discrimination even further.

Wellbeing and Economic Security

There is a strong relationship between wellbeing and economic security, and discrimination. The measures of wellbeing and of economic security reported in the study are most positive for Torontonians who do not experience *any* discrimination and become more negative as the scores on the discrimination scale rise (indicating more frequent experiences of discrimination).

Torontonians who experience the most frequent discrimination have lower life satisfaction, poorer mental health and less economic security than those who experience less frequent or no discrimination.

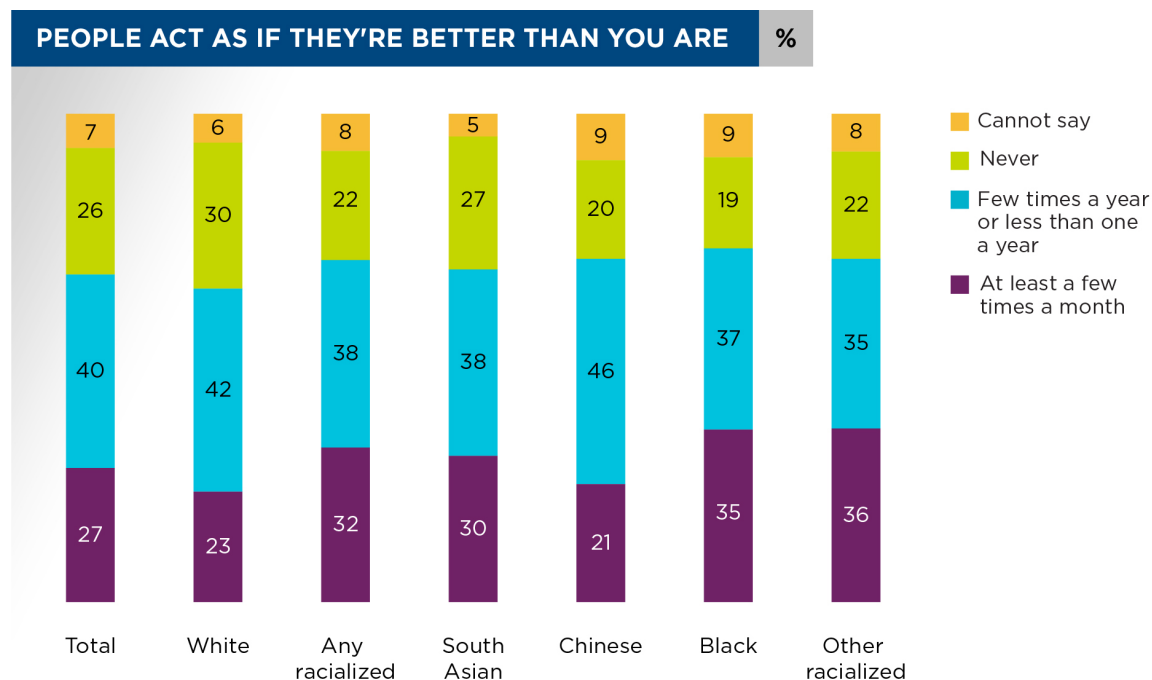
More on the 2022 Toronto Social Capital Study

The study is a partnership of leading civic organizations across the city. The research was conducted by the Environics Institute for Survey Research, in partnership with Toronto Foundation, as well as Metcalf Foundation, MLSE Foundation, Northcrest Developments, Ontario Trillium Foundation, TAS, United Way Greater Toronto, the Wellesley Institute and YMCA of Greater Toronto. An additional group of collaborating partners helped support the launch of the report, including Atkinson Foundation, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, CivicAction, Counselling Foundation of Canada, Crosswalk Communities, Laidlaw Foundation and Toronto Zoo Wildlife Conservancy.

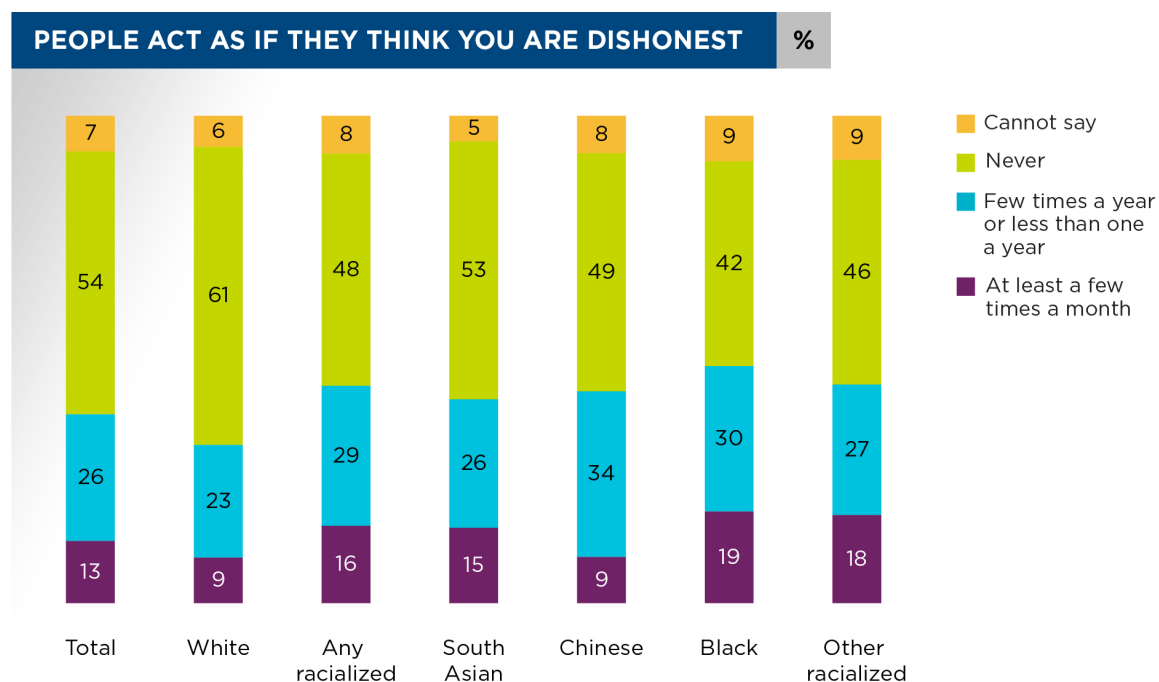
Read the full 2022 Toronto Social Capital Study at www.torontofoundation.ca/socialcapital

APPENDIX

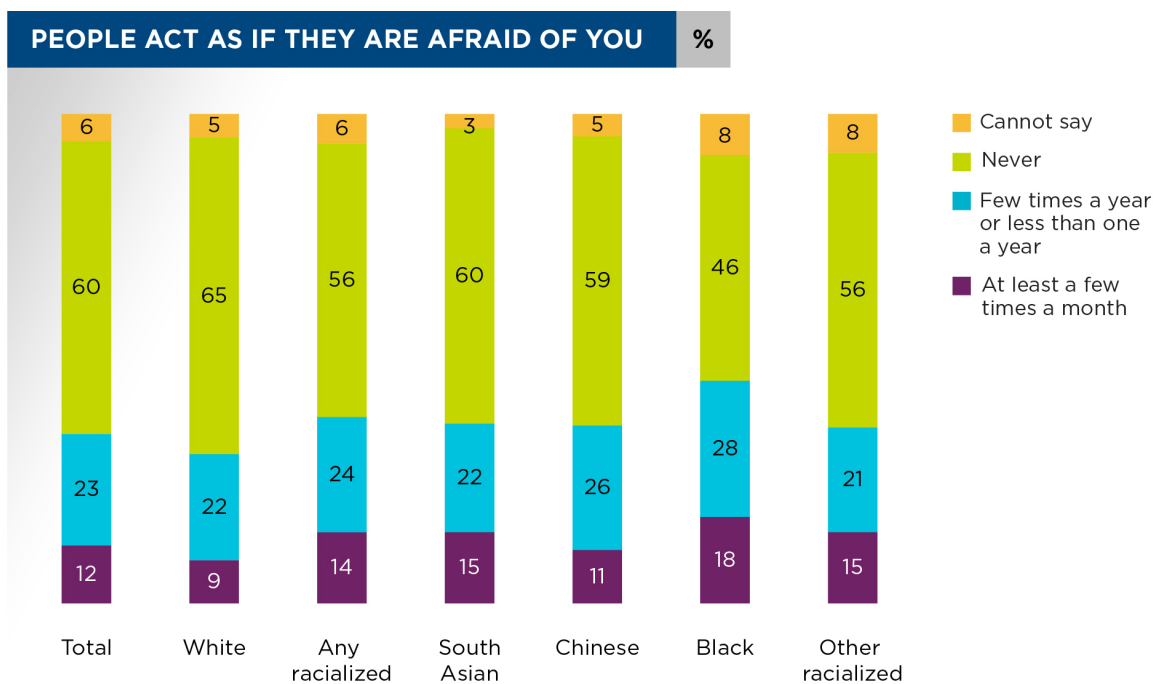
DISCRIMINATION DATA



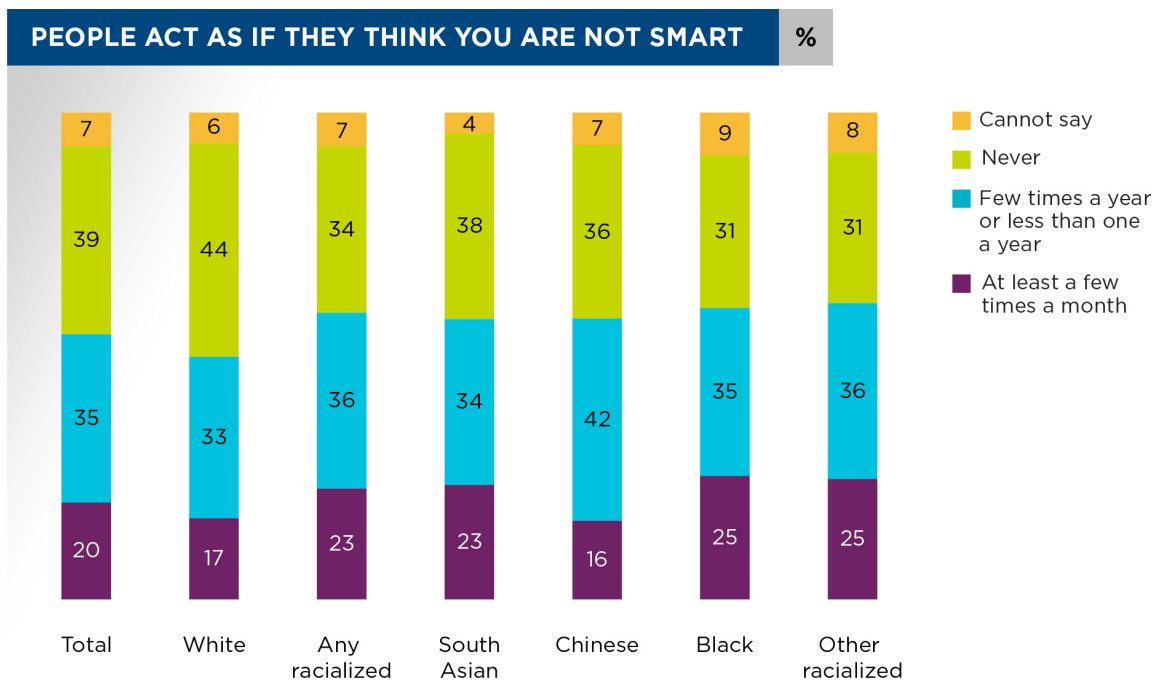
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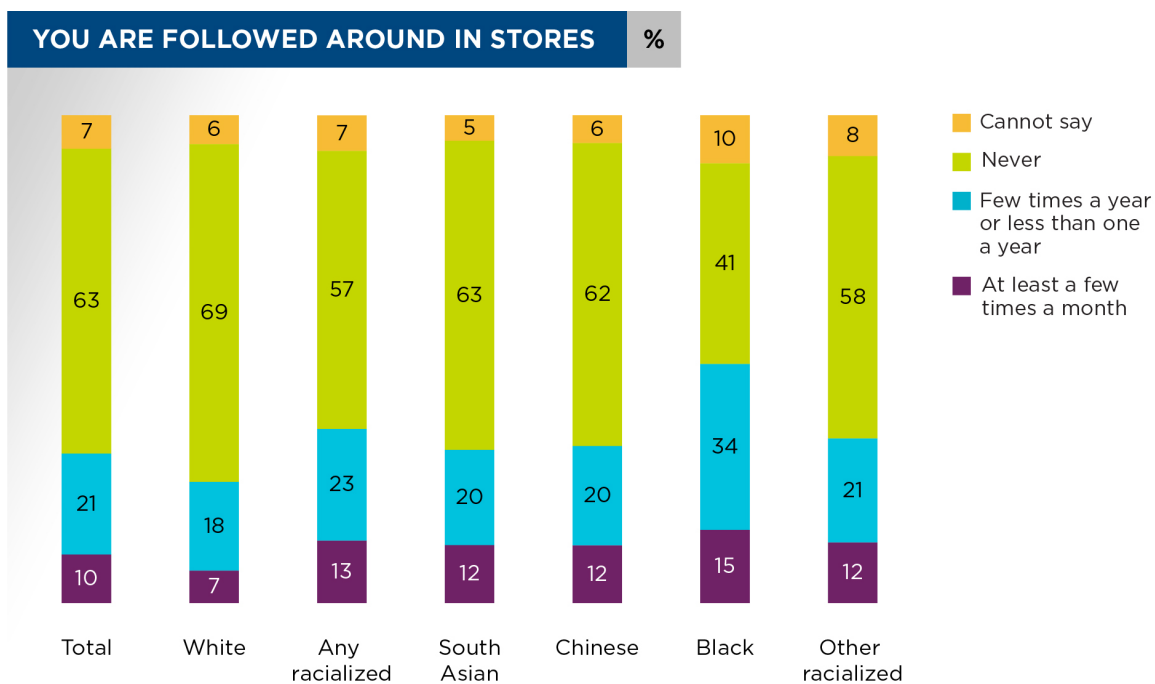
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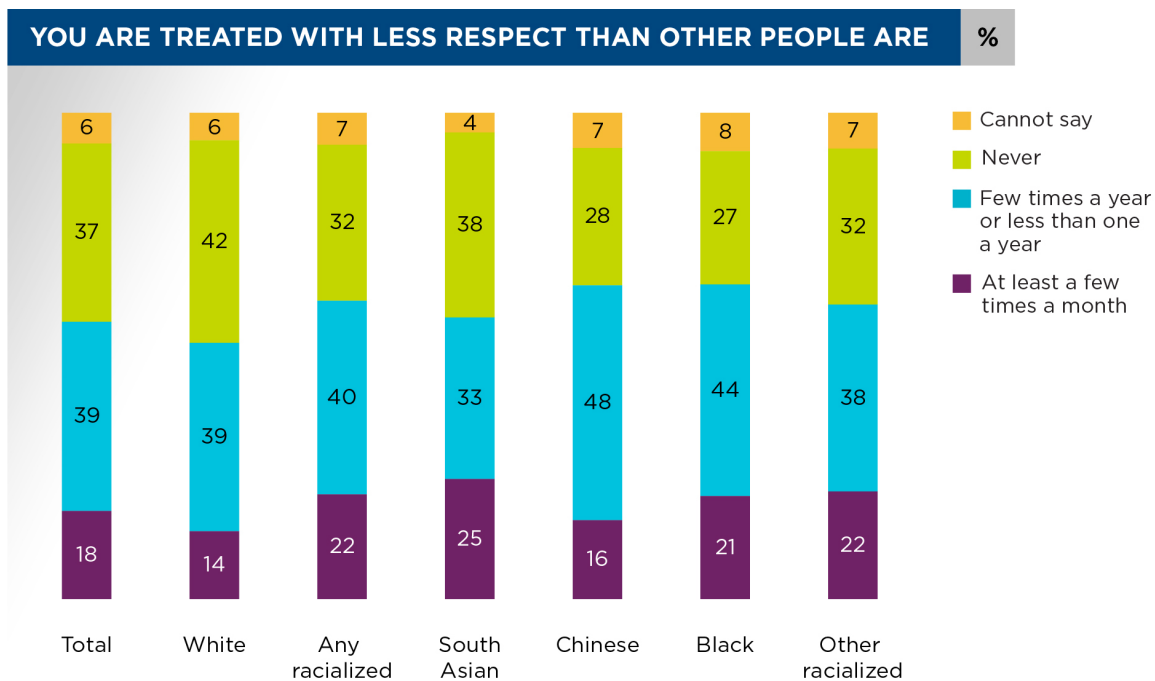
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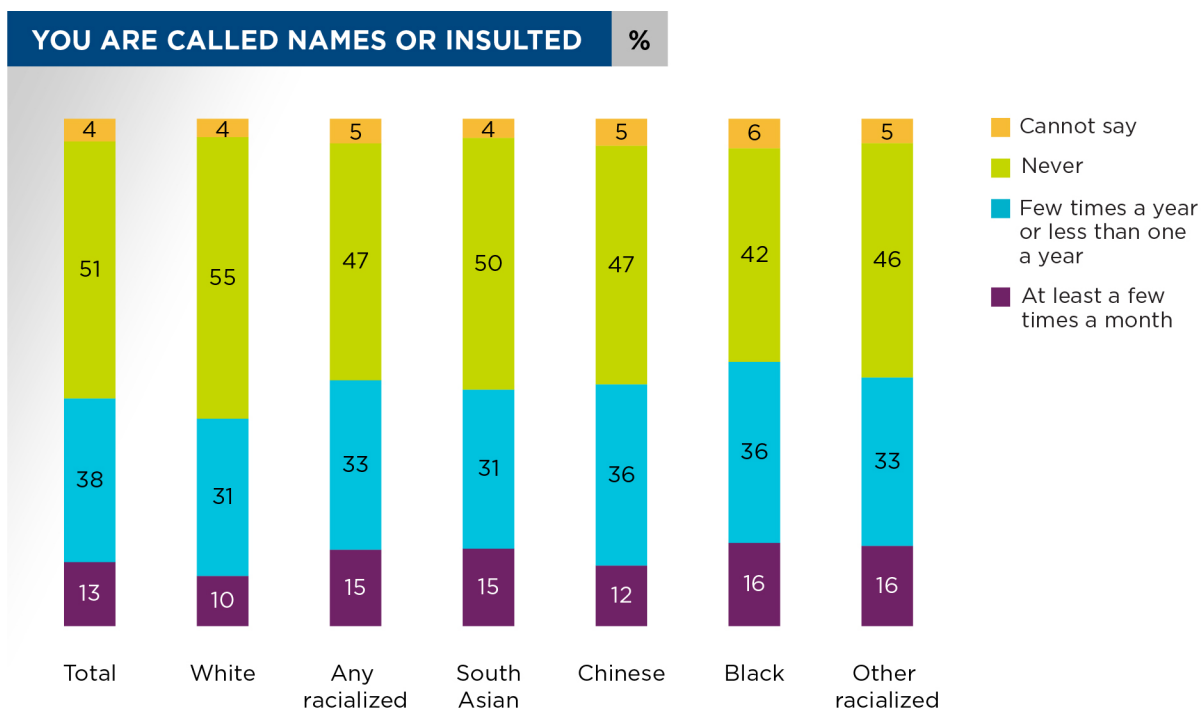
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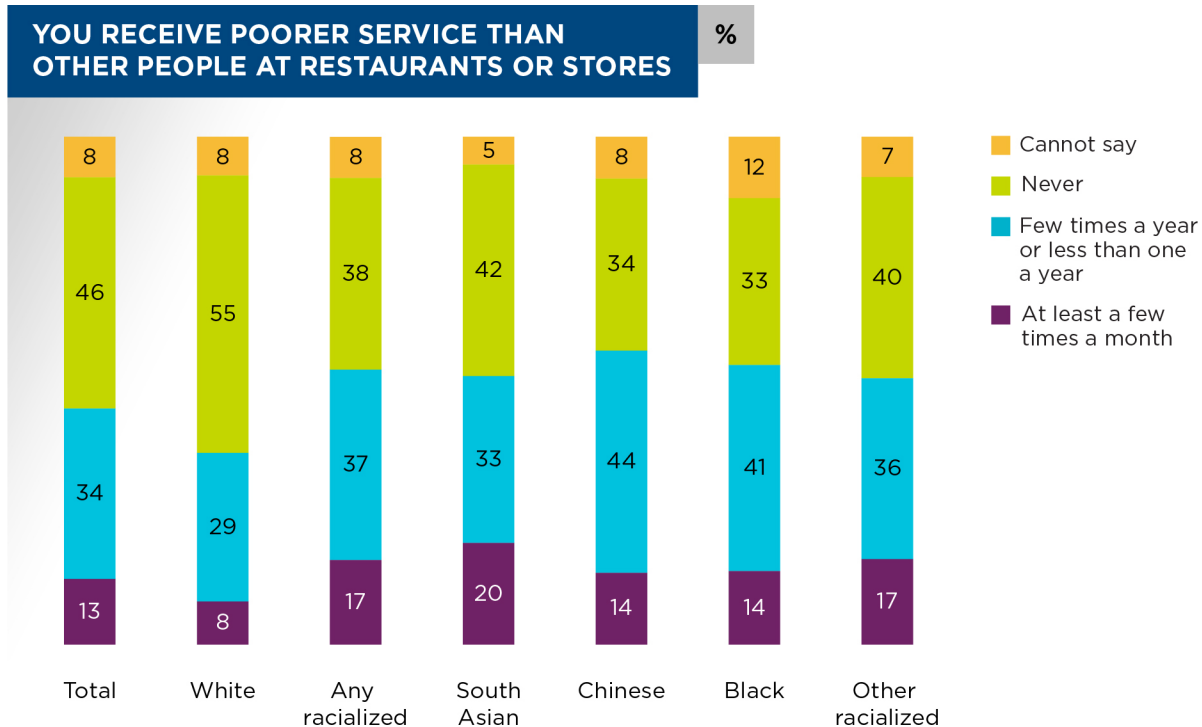
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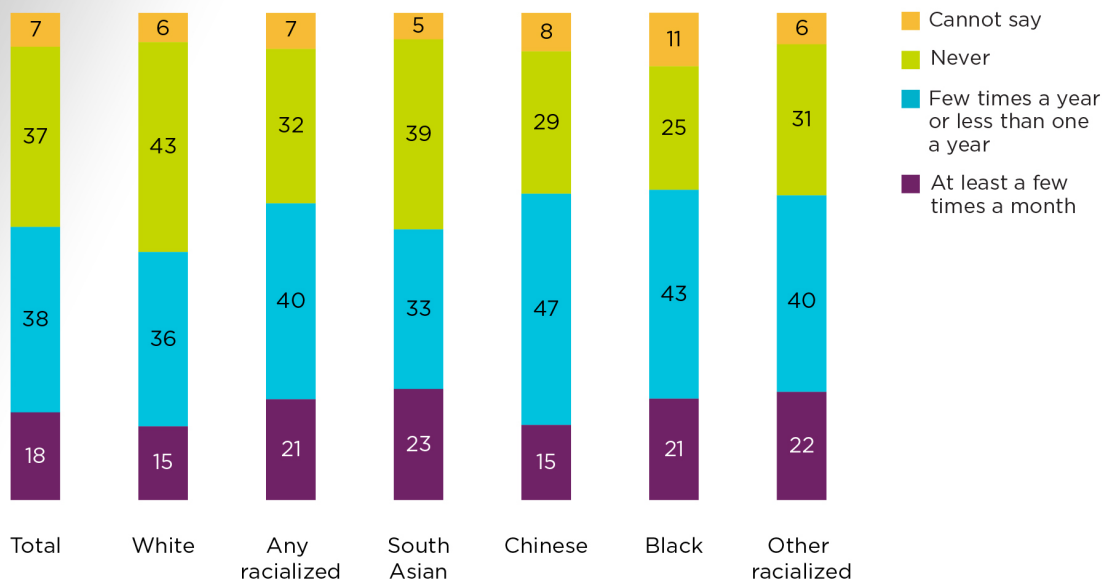


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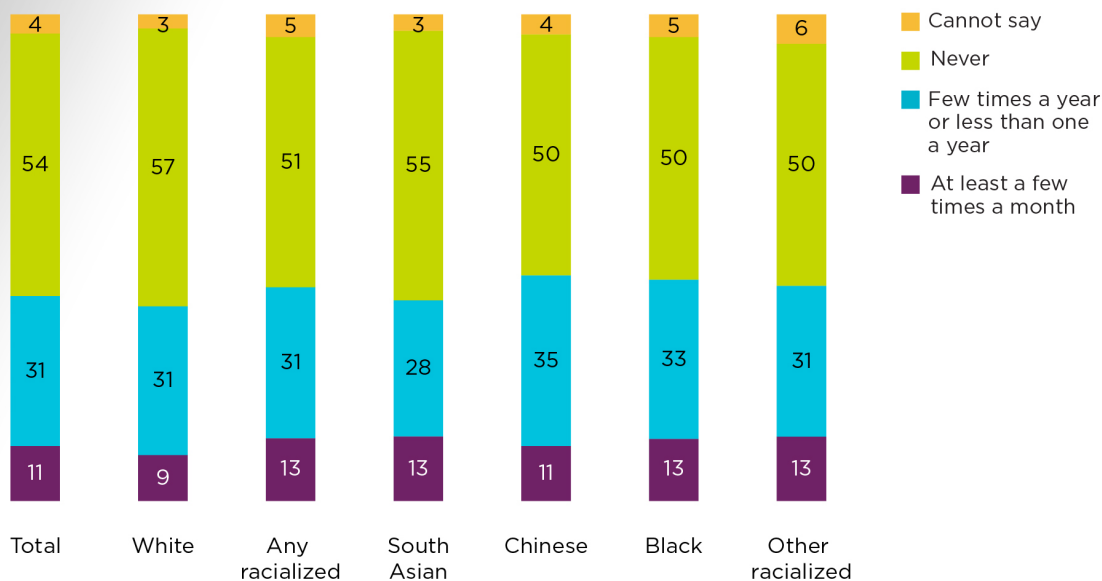
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YOU ARE TREATED WITH LESS COURTESY THAN OTHER PEOPLE ARE %



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YOU ARE THREATENED OR HARASSED %



The sum of each column may not appear to add to 100% due to rounding.

Disaggregated data is available for Torontonians who identify as Black, Chinese, South Asian, or white (these are the largest racial identity groups in the city), as well as for those who identify with another racialized group. For the full set of disaggregated data click [here](#).